

The commission created last year to inquire into the question of uniting New-York and Brooklyn and their immediate surroundings into one municipality has been rather slow in announcing the result of its studies. It seems to have only got so far as to formulate a proposition for its own consideration, and it is doubtful if it will be ready to make a definite report to the Legislature at the present session. It is desirable at least to get the proposition into a form in which it can be subject to popular discussion. Much will depend upon the way the matter is regarded by the people concerned, and opportunity should be given as soon as possible for them to give it consideration. A good deal of definite information ought to be collected and laid before the public to enable it to judge intelligently of the effect upon various interests of the proposed consolidation.

The object is not to join together several different communities with diverse interests, but to consolidate into a single municipality what are already parts of one community. The metropolis, properly speaking, already comprises New-York, Brooklyn, Long Island City, and the area adjacent to them, including Coney Island and Staten Island. These places can scarcely be said to have a separate existence. They are all appurtenant to and dependent upon the commercial and social entity whose centre is on the lower part of Manhattan Island. Brooklyn is but an extension of New-York across the East River, and for expansion in that direction all the eastern end of Long Island needs to be included within the metropolitan limits. Then it would be but logical to carry the north boundary across to the Sound to form a junction with the new eastern line. Staten Island has no use except to present another front to the bay for the great port of New-York, and to afford space for gardens and suburban residences for the busy population of the metropolitan community. Communication between these parts of the same civic entity is still imperfect, but it is destined to be greatly improved in the next few years. Schemes are already on foot for connecting Staten Island with Brooklyn and Brooklyn with the lower end of Manhattan Island by tunnel, and this connection may be extended under the North River to the Jersey shore, and so around to Staten Island again. The demand for easier communication across the East River is producing new bridge schemes, some of which are bound to be carried out. In the years to come this stream, broad as it is, will be spanned like the Thames and the Seine by ligatures uniting the parts of one metropolis. With these lines of communication bringing together the severed parts of the community that has grown up on this imperial site, and with adequate means of rapid transit through the island of Manhattan, there will be no material shifting of the real centre of the metropolis. Where the main lines bring Staten Island and Long Island into conjunction with Manhattan Island, the centre of commercial and civic vitality will remain. Wall Street and City Hall Park will still represent the focus of activity and of life, so far as the municipality is to be regarded as a body politic subject to one system of administrative control. Its social life will be diversified and distributed, but its civic life will be concentrated, and the focus of the main currents of activity will be where it has always been, near the gateway of the Atlantic, where the lines of communication from all the world converge.

The consolidation of the metropolis may come soon or it may be delayed, according to the readiness of the people of its various parts to enter into a "more perfect union," but it is destined to come as the sheer result of growth and irresistible coalescence. The people of New-York appear to be ready for it now, and such reluctance as is apparent is shown by the lesser parts of the great aggregation, and yet there is no doubt that the greatest benefit would come to them. They lag in matters of public improvement and complain of the burden of public expense. With a common tax rate and common expenditures for the whole area which it is proposed to unite, New-York would draw nothing from the resources of Brooklyn or Staten Island, but it would contribute much to build up and advance their local advantages. Expenses and benefits would be equalized, but the immediate drain would come upon Manhattan Island and the immediate gain would be distributed elsewhere. But in the long run the process would result in a general advantage and promote the development of a homogeneous municipality.

No doubt the problem of Government for the future metropolis is one that will tax the capacity of the municipal statesmen and of the people, but it is no more difficult for the same population under a single administration than under several. With a well-devised plan there is every chance of improvement for the whole community. When the commission has its plan formulated and its charter prepared the people will have something upon which they can ponder and form a judgment. Until that is done they can only consider the general outlines of a scheme which seems like a necessary evolution from the growth of the community that has been planted about New-York Bay and the waters that connect with it.